

David Thunder

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY RESEARCHER & LECTURER

PROFILE

My professional passion is the study of the conditions under which a functional, free and flourishing human society can be created and preserved over time. This fundamental concern has led me to develop a special interest in governance under conditions of complexity, the role of civil society associations in a free society, and the conditions under which federalism can facilitate the growth of free and flourishing communities. I believe my innate curiosity, diverse life experiences (having lived in U.S., Mexico, Europe, and Africa) and intellectual formation (having worked many years in Anglo-American as well as continental European intellectual environments) have afforded me a perspective on social order that is sufficiently broad and versatile to recognize patterns in social life that certain dominant Western narratives tend to conceal. In particular, I have become keenly sensitive to the order-conferring potential of civil society associations and the inability of a State-imposed order to adequately replicate the goods realized in small-scale community and institutional settings. My current book project, *The Polycentric Republic*, advocates replacing monistic and Statist ideals of order with a pluralist, polycentric, and federalist ideal of civil order.

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Researcher - Institute for Culture & Society, University of Navarra

AUGUST 2012 — PRESENT

Lecturer - School of Economics & Business, University of Navarra

JANUARY 2017 — DECEMBER 2020

Lecturer - Department of Philosophy, University of Navarra

SEPTEMBER 2012 — DECEMBER 2017

Visiting Assistant Prof. - Department of Political Science, Villanova University

SEPTEMBER 2011 — JUNE 2012

Visiting Assistant Prof. - Matthew J Ryan Center, Villanova University

SEPTEMBER 2019 — JUNE 2011

Postdoctoral Research Fellow - James Madison Program, Princeton University

SEPTEMBER 2008 — JUNE 2009

Junior Visiting Fellow - Witherspoon Institute

SEPTEMBER 2007 — JUNE 2008

Visiting Assistant Professor - Bucknell University

SEPTEMBER 2006 — JUNE 2007

EDUCATION

M.A & Ph.D. in Political Science, University of Notre Dame

SEPTEMBER 2000 — JUNE 2006

M.A. in Philosophy, University College Dublin

SEPTEMBER 1997 — JUNE 1998

B.A. in Philosophy & French, University College Dublin

SEPTEMBER 1993 — JUNE 1997

CURRENT POSITION

Permanent Researcher,
Institute for Culture & Society,
University of Navarra,
Spain

dthunder@unav.es

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- Polycentric models of governance & civil order
- Citizenship, freedom and self-government
- Theory and practice of federalism
- The idea of a civil economy

SKILLS

- Leadership & Team Management
- Broad Public Engagement
- Critical & Creative Thinking
- Clear & Cogent Writing

HOBBIES

Photography, guitar, padel

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Many of my academic writings, in addition to interviews and op eds, can be accessed directly on my website:

www.davidthunder.com

LANGUAGES

English

Spanish

French

Italian

RESEARCH GRANTS AND PROJECTS

- **I3 Consolidation Grant**

JAN 2022 — MAR 2024

I won this consolidation grant from the Spanish State Research Agency in recognition of outstanding research. **€100K in total.**

- **Ramón y Cajal Research Grant**

JAN 2017 — DEC 2021

I won this grant from the Spanish State Research Agency to support research costs for 4 years, and co-finance my salary for the duration of 5 years. **€200K in total.**

- **RES PUBLICA: Building Res Publica in a Culturally and Morally Complex Society: A Normative Inquiry Informed by History, Law, and Social Science**

SEP 2020 — DEC 2023

I am **Principal Investigator** of this project. The project is financed by a private Spanish foundation, FUNCIVA (Fundación Ciudadanía y Valores). We investigate strategies and norms for adapting political structures and practices to the needs of complex societies. **€39K in total.**

MONOGRAPHS

- ***Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life.*** Cambridge University Press, 2014.

“It is commonly held by political philosophers and theologians that the ethical principles that guide one in one’s attempt to live a worthy human life should not be decisive for what one does in one’s role as citizen; that role, so it is said, has its own distinct principles and source of principles. David Thunder makes the most detailed and powerful case anyone has yet made against this separationist thesis and in support of the opposing integrationist thesis: that we should give our deepest ethical commitments full play in what we do as citizens. Not only does personal ethical integrity require it; liberal democracy is in danger if citizens wall off the role of citizen from the norms and values that make for a worthy human life. *Citizenship and the Pursuit of the Worthy Life* is the ‘against the grain’ book that those of us who do not buy the separationist thesis have long been looking for.”

—Endorsement by Nicholas Wolterstorff, Noah Porter Professor Emeritus of Philosophical Theology, Yale University

- ***The Polycentric Republic: A Theory of Civil Order for Free and Diverse Societies.*** In progress.

Highly centralised schemes of social cooperation that place an immense amount of regulatory, fiscal, and police power in the hands of a single government, contain within them a logic of cultural and institutional homogenisation that is harmful to the social ecology of human flourishing, which requires a plurality of diversely structured social groups. In this book, I aim to weaken the grip of mono-centric visions of society over our imagination and exhibit the advantages of a style of political theory that is more finely attuned to the complex needs of human associations and their participants.

EDITED VOLUMES

- ***The Ethics of Citizenship in the 21st Century.*** Editor & Contributor. Springer, 2017.
- ***Polycentric Governance and the Good Society: A Normative and Philosophical Investigation.*** Co-editor with Pablo Paniagua. Under contract with Lexington Books. Expected publication date in 2024.

JOURNAL ARTICLES

- “Moral Parochialism and the Limits of Impartiality” - *The Heythrop Journal*, vol. 61 (2020), pp. 24-34.
- “Can a Good Person Be a Good Trader? An Ethical Defense of Financial Trading” - *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 159, no. 1 (Sep 2019), pp. 89-103. With Marta Rocchi.
- “The Public Role of Humanities Scholarship, in the Humboldtian Tradition” – *Univ of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. 85, n. 4 (Fall 2016), pp. 46-66.
- “Rethinking the Ethics of Giving: The Normative and Motivational Inadequacy of Resource Management Approaches to Beneficence.” - *Journal of Social Philosophy*, vol. 46, no. 3 (Fall 2015), pp. 297-317.
- “Why Respect for Freedom Cannot Explain the Content and Grounds of Human Rights: A Response to Valentini.” - *Political Theory*, vol. 42, n. 4 (August 2014), pp. 490-497.
- “Am I My Brother’s Keeper? Grounding and Motivating an Ethos of Social Responsibility in a Free Society.” - *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 12, no. 4 (December 2009), pp. 559-580.
- “Why Value Pluralism Does Not Support the State’s Enforcement of Liberal Autonomy: A Response to Crowder.” - *Political Theory*, vol. 37, no. 1 (February 2009), pp. 154-160.
- “A Rawlsian Argument Against the Duty of Civility.” - *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 50, no. 3 (July 2006), pp. 676-690.
- “Can a Good Person Be a Lawyer?” *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2006), pp. 313-334.

BOOK CHAPTERS

- “Associational Life and Liberty: A Critical Interpretation of Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*.” In *Culture, Secularisation and Democracy: Lessons from Alexis de Tocqueville*. Edited by Hans-Martien ten Napel and Sophie van Bijsterveld. [Forthcoming](#) with Routledge.
- “Imagining a Post-Sovereign Polity as a Realistic Utopia.” In *Rethinking Democracy for Post-Utopian Worlds. Alternative Political Projects After the Sovereign State*. Edited by Julia Urabayen and Jorge León Casero. [Forthcoming](#) with Springer.
- “The ‘Neighbourhood as a Pivotal Element of the Infrastructure of a Flourishing Society.’” In *Happiness and Domestic Life: The Influence of the Home on Subjective and Social Wellbeing* (New York: Routledge, 2022). With Ana Cecilia Serrano-Núñez.
- “Overcoming the Myth of the Sovereign, Self-Governing People.” In *Dynamics of Authority in Citizenship and Political Community*, ed. Trevor Stack & Rose Luminiello. (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2022). pp. 125-146.
- “From Polis to Metropolis: On the Limits of Classical Approaches to Governance in a Fragmented Social Landscape.” In *Disciplines of the City: New Forms of Governance in Today’s Postmetropolises*, ed. Julia Urabayen & Jorge León Casero (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2019), pp. 3-31.
- “The Place of Conscience-Based Exemptions in the Struggle Against Injustice.” In *Contemporary Challenges to Conscience: Legal & Ethical Frameworks for Professional Conduct*, ed. A. Stepkowski (Peter Lang, 2019), pp. 41-56.

- **“What is the Use of an Ethical Theory of Citizenship?” & “An Ethical Defense of Citizenship.”** In *The Ethics of Citizenship in the 21st Century*. Springer, 2017.
- **“Managing the Social and Moral Costs of a Culture of Choice.”** In *Margaret S. Archer sobre Cultura y Socialización en la Modernidad Tardía [Margaret S. Archer on Culture and Socialization in Late Modernity]*. Eunsa, 2015.
- **“Public Reason and Abortion Revisited.”** In *Persons, Moral Worth, and Embryos: A Critical Analysis of Pro-Choice Arguments*, ed. Stephen Napier. Springer, 2011, pp. 239-254.
- **“Can the Political Priority of Liberty be Squared with the Ethical Priority of Flourishing?”** In *Reading Rasmussen and Den Uyl: Critical Essays on Norms of Liberty*. Lexington Books, 2008, pp. 27-39

RESEARCH VISITS

- **University of Oxford**
MAY 2017 — JUNE 2017
Visiting Fellow, Programme for the Foundations of Law and Constitutional Government, Faculty of Law
- **Technische Universität of Munich**
JUNE 2019 — JULY 2019
Visiting Scholar, Hochschule für Politik
- **University of Leiden**
JANUARY 2022 — MARCH 2022
Guest Researcher, School of Law, University of Leiden

TEACHING

UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA, 2012-2021

- Democracy and Self-Government (Humanities & PPE elective) Spring 2021
- Society & Politics: The Quest for Order in a Fragmented World (24-hour PPE module) Spring 2019
- Etica y Orden Social [Ethics and Social Order] (module of MA in Governance & Culture of Organisations) Fall 2018, Fall 2019
- Etica, Gobierno, y Orden Social (Ethics, Governance & Social Order) (module of MA in Governance & Culture of Organisations) Spring 2017
- Ancient & Modern Political Philosophy (in Spanish) co-taught w/ M. Herrero Fall 2015 & Fall 2016
- Freedom, Power, and Authority (Advanced Undergraduate Course) Fall 2014
- Introduction to Ethics (Undergraduate course) Sept. 2012-May 2013

VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY, 2009-2011

- Globalization and Community (Undergraduate course) Fall 2012
- Religion and Politics (Undergraduate course) Fall 2012

- Social Justice (MA course) Fall 2011
- Social Justice (Undergraduate Course) Fall 2011
- Traditions in Conversation great books seminar (premodern) Fall '09, '10, & '11
- Modernity & Its Discontents (great books seminar) Spring '10 & Spring '11
- Citizenship in Practice (MA course) Fall '10

BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY, 2006-2007

- Introduction to Political Theory (two sections) Fall 2006 & Spring 2007
- American Political Thought (senior seminar) Fall 2006
- Christianity and Democracy (senior seminar) Spring 2007

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Peer Reviewer for Lexington Books, Oxford University Press.

Peer Reviewer for *The Review of Politics*, *Journal of Politics*, *American Political Science Review*, *American Political Thought*, *Political Studies*, *Polity*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Social Theory & Practice*, *Ethical Perspectives*, *Critical Review of International Social & Political Philosophy*

Convened conference on *Ethics of Citizenship in the 21st Century*, Institute for Culture and Society, Univ. of Navarra (invited 6 international scholars from Europe, the US, and New Zealand) May 30th & 31st 2014

Organizer and Convenor, *Ethics & Society Forum*, Institute for Culture and Society, University of Navarra (regular research roundtable for presentation of work in progress) Jan 2013-May 2015

Editor and Research Assistant, Mary Keys, *Aquinas, Aristotle, and the Promise of the Common Good* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). 2004-2005

Vice President for Professional Development, ND Poli Sci Graduate Organization Sep '04 – June '05

Political Theory Representative, Dept of Political Science, Univ. of Notre Dame Sep '03 – June '04

Internal Reader, *The Review of Politics*, University of Notre Dame
Evaluated approximately 100 articles submitted to journal. Sep '02 – Sep '03

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- I have conducted **ten radio interviews**, **two live TV discussions**, and **numerous podcast/YouTube interviews**, on a variety of issues related to current affairs, including the rise of populism, the future of the European Union, the limits of the sovereign State, and pandemic policies in the West.
- I have published **over 60 opinion articles** in English and Spanish-speaking newspapers and online media, including *The Irish Times*, *Spiked*, *Mercatornet*, *Gript*, *El Mundo*, *El País*, *Expansión*, *El Confidencial*, and *Diario de Navarra*, on a wide range of issues, including corruption in public life, the rise of populism in the West, the future of UK after Brexit, and the handling of the pandemic by Western governments.
- I have given **guest talks to numerous civic and cultural associations**, including **Kratos** (a Spanish/Navarran association aimed at educating the public about the nature of a free and responsible society), **TASC** (Think-Tank for Action on Social Change), **Sociedad de Estudios Vascos** (Society of Basque Studies), **Encuentro**

Mundial de Valores (Mexico), Unión Social de Empresario Mexicanos, World Youth Alliance and Spotlight (a cultural and civic formation group in Pamplona, Spain).

DELIVERED PAPERS/PRESENTATIONS

I have given over **50 public talks/presentations** between 2005 and 2022, mostly at academic conferences and universities, occasionally for civil society and cultural associations. Here is a small selection of my most recent presentations:

- 06/10/2022 **“How the Structure of Urban Spaces Can Foster Trust Between Citizens.”**
—Online presentation at 2nd annual conference on philosophy and the city, “Imaginar, convivir, habitar,” hosted by Núcleo Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Desarrollo de Faro, Santiago de Chile
- 30/08/2021 **Overcoming the Myth of the Sovereign, Self-Governing People.**
—Online presentation at annual conference of European Consortium of Political Research, on the panel, “Engaging Authority: Citizenship and Political Community.” 30/8/2021. Youtube link: <https://youtu.be/KOsfKzrevvU>
- 18/08/2021 **The Social Ontology of the Sovereign State: A Critical Assessment.**
—Online presentation at the annual conference of the International Social Ontology Society. Youtube link: https://youtu.be/3rAUvy7_CaI
- 02/09/2021 **“On the Limits of Territorial Federalism.”**
—Online presentation for the Project on Tocqueville, religion and democracy led by Prof. Hans-Martien ten Napel of the Law Faculty at the University of Leiden, Netherlands.
- 01/06/2021 **"Vaccine Passports: A Reasonable Defence of Public Health or an Attack on Bodily Integrity and Civic Equality?"**
—Presented at conference on "Citizenship in Pandemic Times," held online by Centre for the Study of Citizenship of Wayne University and Centre for Citizenship, Civil Society, and Rule of Law of University of Aberdeen.
- 20/11/2020 **“The Limits of Representative Democracy as an Institutional Context for Good Governance.”**
—Talk at the “Zoom conference on evaluating self-governance”, Department of Political Economy, King’s College London
- 13/11/2020 **“The “Neighbourhood” as a Pivotal Element of the Infrastructure of a Flourishing Society.”**
—Online pre-recorded video presentation for conference on “Happy Homes Happy Society? The Contribution of Domestic Life in a Time of Social Changes,” hosted by Home Renaissance Foundation.
- 23/01/20 **“Sovereign Rule and the Still-Birth of Freedom: Why a Consociational Republic May Be Preferable to a Sovereign State.”**
— Presentation of book in progress at Centre for the Study of Governance & Society, Department of Political Economy, King’s College London.
- 15/07/19 **“The Social Ecology of Freedom: A Libertarian-Perfectionist Case for Polycentric, Consociational Governance.”**
— Presentation of book in progress at Political Theory Symposium, Hochschule für Politik, Tech. Universität, München.
- 04/06/19 **“Two Rival Strategies for Achieving a Free and Flourishing Society: The Consociational Republic Versus the Sovereign State.”**
— Guest Lecture, Faculty of Law, University of Münster.